

Shooting for a spiritual bond

Artist hopes his photos of religious imagery click with viewers

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By MICHAEL E. YOUNG / The Dallas Morning News

Some of Bob Munro's photos carry overtly religious themes – statues of praying angels, Mary draped with rosary beads, a dusty adobe church in the desert Southwest. But it isn't always religion that connects with viewers.



MILTON HINNANT/DMN

Bob Munro has traveled the world with his camera, amassing a photograph collection at his Dallas studio that features religious and other spiritual imagery.

"Some aren't sure why they feel a connection with the photo," said Mr. Munro. "One young girl said, 'I really enjoy this [photo of a] cross and want to have it in my house. But I'm not religious.'

"It was just comforting to her."

Comfort and connection are the things Mr. Munro hopes to foster with his art. To encourage those connections, he started Sacred Pause Studio in Dallas and a Web site, www.sacredpause.com.

Fascinated with photography since he was a child, he always carried a camera when he traveled overseas for his job with J.C. Penney Co.

"I'd take photos of far-off, exotic places and put them in my scrapbooks. I started doing my own Christmas cards, and people would say, 'You need to do more of this, expand on it, make it a business,' but I never did," he said.

Six years ago, he entered a church art show and realized his photos brought about an emotional connection with viewers.

"They liked them, they bought them, and it kind of grew from there," Mr. Munro said.

He also began using his photos for workshops – not to teach photography, but to encourage people to enjoy a "sacred pause" in life.

"We're missing that sunrise or sunset each day, and we need to take that quiet time, to slow down and prioritize our lives," he said.

The notion of a sacred pause came to him on a trip to California.

He awoke early one morning, "a time when the stars and moon were still out but the sun was just beginning to come up, the in-between time where the busy day hadn't started and night was still there."

It seemed a spiritual moment to him.

"There are religious symbols in my work," Mr. Munro said, "but there's also a silent oasis, a grove of trees.

"So I let the work speak to my customers," he said. "I leave the question of spirituality up to them."